

RAYMOND GERVAIS

3x1

CURATOR: NICOLE GINGRAS



NOVEMBER 1 – DECEMBER 10, 2011



Raymond Gervais, 3+1 =, 1977. Installation for four record players presented at Galerie Gilles Gheerbrant, Montréal 1977. Photo: Pierre Boogaerts

WAYS OF THINKING

Ways of Thinking is designed for anyone interested in exploring contemporary art and its exhibition framework. It offers succinct and synthesized information on the exhibition's concept, the artists and the works featured. For the complete version of *Ways of Thinking* that includes bibliographic references, please see our website: www.ellengallery.concordia.ca/2006/en/

Working in the field of contemporary art since the beginning of the 1970s, Raymond Gervais has created a unique and heterogeneous body of work. His oeuvre includes photographs, texts, sculptures, installations, and performances revolving around a question that he has made his own: the aural imagination – essentially, a way of conceptualizing and thinking about sound, the act of listening, and the *image* of sound. An artist-musician or sound artist turning toward silence. A performance artist as well as essay and fiction writer. A composer developing the narrative of a work, text, installation, or performance like a score, which he offers visitors. A conceptual artist questioning our understanding of an image, narrative, performance, text, sound, or film. An artist fascinated by sound yet haunted by the larger question of existence and its intrinsic silence.

Raymond Gervais' world is constructed around text, sound, and the visual. These three elements – words, sound, images – are dealt with transversally as only a labyrinthine mind can. They share a poetic link as confirmed by the artist's attachment to different forms of disappearance, offering him a multiplicity of possible fictions.

The exhibition at the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery highlights the role that musical instruments and various sound transmission devices play in Raymond Gervais' practice. It allows us to explore several of the artist's key themes: the question of the cycle, the spiral, the loop – manifested here by various conceptual and mechanical devices. These various circular movements evoke the image of the whirling dervish, a key figure for the artist, symbolizing infinite movement.

Nicole Gingras

This two-part exhibition, with an accompanying publication, is a coproduction of the Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery and VOX, centre de l'image contemporaine.

This exhibition examines a significant body of work produced over a 35-year period by this Québécois conceptual artist whose practice resonates deeply with contemporary art and attitudes. Sound, image and text form the three central axes around which the exhibition addresses problematics that Gervais has explored since the beginning of his career.

Raymond Gervais was born in 1946 in Montréal. Since the mid 1970s he has produced installations and performances that intersect with music, literature, and the visual arts. Records, turntables and CD cases are the subject of an ongoing exploration. In 1973, he formed the *Atelier de musique expérimentale* (AME), a non-profit association devoted to promoting new approaches to musical improvisation, with Yves Bouliane, Vincent Dionne, Michel Di Torre, and Robert Marcel Lepage. AME organized the first Montréal appearances of Roscoe Mitchell (Art Ensemble of Chicago), Dollar Brand (Abdullah Ibrahim), and Karl Berger (Creative Music Studio, Woodstock). Gervais is the author of critical commentaries, essays and statements on musicians, visual artists, and his own practice that have been published in catalogues, anthologies, and periodicals. For a number of years he was the *musique actuelle* columnist at the contemporary art magazine *Parachute*. Raymond Gervais has participated in numerous exhibitions in Québec, Canada, and abroad. They include *Tendances actuelles*, Canadian Cultural Centre, Paris (1977); *Yesterday and After*, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts (1980); *OKanada*, Akademie der Künste, Berlin (1983); *Aurora Borealis*, Centre international d'art contemporain (1985); *Broken Music*, Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal (1990); *Roto-Univers*, Power Plant, Toronto (1992); *Are You Talking to Me?*, Galerie de l'UQAM, Montréal (2003); *Soundtracks: Re-Play*, Edmonton Art Gallery and Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, University of Toronto (2003); *Frottements et surfaces sonores*, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec (2004); and *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965–1980*, Alberta Art Gallery, Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery, Concordia University, Halifax INK, Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, University of Toronto, Vancouver Art Gallery (2010/2011). His works are part of both public and private collections in Québec and Canada. Raymond Gervais lives in Montréal.

COMMENCER PAR, PUISQU'À TOUTE FIN CORRESPOND

1975 / Black and white video, sound / 40 min. / Distribution: Vidéographe

12 + 1 =

1976 / Photograph / Photograph of the installation presented at Galerie Média, Montréal, in 1976 / Photo: Roland Poulin / Initially conceived as a sound installation where the artist played 13 records simultaneously on 13 record players. The work has been exhibited subsequently without sound as a photograph / Collection of the artist

ROCHE

1976 / Performance / 10 min. 51 sec. / Digital transfer of sound recording of this performance for piano and rock, recorded in the artist's home in 1976 / Collection of the artist

LES ACCORDS INTUITIFS

1976 / Performance; composition by Raymond Gervais / 10 min. / Digital transfer of sound recording / Performers: Pierre Chartier, Jean Derome, Charles de Mestral, Serge Foisy / Collection of the artist

DÉJÀ LÀ

1976–1977 / Installation / 2 tables, 13 metronomes, radio, batteries, alarm clock, saxophone and case, toy trumpet, vase, carnations, photograph album / National Gallery of Canada Collection, Ottawa; purchased 1978

3 + 1 =

1977–2011 / Installation / 4 posters / Silent version of a sound-based work / Photos: Pierre Boogaerts / Collection of the artist

CARIGNAN: CIRCUIT-LES-PONTS

1977 / Elements of the performance presented during the event *03 23 03 Premières rencontres internationales art contemporain Montréal 1977* / Series of 45 slides projected during the performance, digitized and transferred to DVD / Walk recorded on audio tape in 1977, digitized and transferred to compact disc. 46 min. 35 sec. / Narration recorded on audio tape in 1977, digitized and transferred to compact disc. Voice: Raymond Gervais. 8 min. / Collection of the artist

THE PASSAGE 2

1978–2011 / Photograph, metronome, batteries / Photo: Jacques Jabhour / Collection of the artist

RE : HENRI ROUSSEAU, LE TOURNE-DISQUE ET LA RECRÉATION DU MONDE

1987 / Photograph (installation excerpt) / National Gallery of Canada Collection, Ottawa; purchased 1989

L'ENCLOS DE VERRE – MAURICE RAVEL JOUE POUR BUD POWELL

1988 / Installation documents: album cover, installation photographs / Photos: Don Corman / Collection of the artist

LE 1^{ER} DISQUE

1990 / Installation / 13 record players, 13 turntable mats, 13 white paper record sleeves, 1 record player with colour photograph, 2 record players with 1 percussion mallet each, 13 transparent plastic record player covers / Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal Collection

PIANO POUR SAMUEL BECKETT

1990 / Found object, silk screen print, drawing / Musée d'art de Joliette Collection; gift of the artist

VIA COPLAND

1990 / Installation / Music stand, album cover, record, photograph, compact disc and case / Collection of the artist

LE VENT TOURNE

1993 / Mirror, 12 electric fans, black paper on floor / Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal Collection; gift of the artist

DANS LE CYLINDRE

1994 / Installation / Photograph, cylinder phonograph, table Purchased for the Prêt d'œuvres d'art collection, 1998; transferred to the permanent collection, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec

ROTO UNIVERS

1994 / Installation excerpt / Metronome, record player / Collection of the artist

EN ATTENDANT BECKETT (AUTOUR DE SAMUEL BECKETT)

1995 / Installation / Record player, table, album cover, music stand, liner notes / Collection Musée régional de Rimouski; gift of the artist

BLAAST

1996–2011 / *Les vents de la Terre*, special issue / 2 compact disc cases, text / Collection of the artist

TOUS LES VIVANTS ÉTAIENT MORTS

1997 / Installation / 27 compact disc cases, texts / Collection of the artist

LES COULEURS DE LA MUSIQUE

2001 / Installation / Album covers, music stand, record player, record Purchased for the Prêt d'œuvres d'art collection, 2004; transferred to the permanent collection, Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec

EXPLORE

- Absence and presence, that which is visible and that which is invisible, sound and silence, and the ways in which these notions either complement each other or act in opposition to each other in this exhibition;
- How personal history overlaps and intertwines with the histories of music, literature, and the avant-garde and the numerous and various narratives that result;
- The ways in which the notions of performance or performativity, theatricality, and staging are present in this work;
- The visual: what are the visual components of this work and what is being made visible here;
- Language: its importance and the various ways in which it is made use of.

A FEW QUESTIONS

- How does this artist make use of the physical space of the Gallery? Does his use of the space strike you as being different from what you are accustomed to seeing, and if so, how?
- Consider placement and arrangement and the ways in which objects are combined in this exhibition. What is this artist developing or evoking in these works?
- In looking at this exhibition, can you start to define central elements or themes in this artist's work? What are they?
- This exhibition contains numerous archival documents relating to the artist's research and practice as well as to the historical context in which the works presented here were produced. How do these documents function? What do they illustrate about the works and what do they add to your understanding of this artist and his place in our recent history?
- Consider the notion of reproduction and the role that it plays in the works presented here. Can you identify specific instances in which it is employed?

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